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The Sequin ✓  
Physiological School

For the Training of Children of  
Arrested Mental Development

370 Centre Street  
Orange, N.J.











THE SEGUIN SCHOOL — Main Building.

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THE SEGUIN  
PHYSIOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
FOR THE TRAINING  
OF  
CHILDREN OF ARRESTED MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

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# THE SEGUIN SCHOOL

ORANGE, N.J.

THIS SCHOOL is situated on an elevated plateau about a mile from the railroad station, and in one of the most attractive of the residence portions of the city. The grounds comprise about four acres, sloping gently away to the rear, the house standing at an elevation of over two hundred feet above the level of the sea.

The climate of this section of country is justly renowned for its mildness and salubrity, and many persons unable to stand the strong salt air of New York and Brooklyn have become satisfied residents of Orange, the advantages gained in this short distance being remarkable, especially in cases involving catarrhal and throat troubles. Here we have the pure air and quiet of the country, shady trees under which the children may sit and play, broad stretches of grassy lawns with facilities for croquet and all out-door games, and many pleasant walks and drives in the vicinity.

The outlying valleys and mountains furnish healthful and restorative influences which cannot fail to be incalculably beneficial. All children are fond of flowers and in our green-houses they may watch them grow and blossom. The roads around Orange are excellent, and every day some of the children are taken to drive.

The work of teaching these unfortunate little ones is peculiarly exhausting, and their teachers, to maintain their strength and courage and not lapse into that listlessness and perfunctory performance of duty which is fatal to improvement in the child, must be within reach of diversions, amusements, recreations such

as only the large cities can afford, and no location could be considered which would isolate them from the outside world, leaving them to depend upon themselves for that relief which cannot be successfully dispensed with. No obstacles of this kind exist in the present case, as Orange is but forty minutes from New York, and there are more than forty trains daily each way.

This accessibility is equally advantageous to parents wishing to visit the school in relation to placing children in our care, and for those visiting children already here.

Orange is on the line of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, with stations at Christopher and Barclay Street ferries in New York.

The gymnasium (see illustration, page 7), completed January 1, 1896, a two-story building, thirty-five feet square, stands twenty-five feet distant from the main building to avoid shutting out light and air, being connected therewith by a covered and heated passage. The entire building is heated by steam and lighted by electricity, a cellar beneath making dampness impossible.

In the gymnasium Swedish and other gymnastics are practiced and special walking and breathing exercises are taught. The upper floor is used for sleeping rooms. A large number of sleeping apartments are requisite, as three children usually occupy a room; a teacher always sleeping in a connecting room that the children may never be without careful supervision, and that the dressing and undressing may be directed by a responsible person.

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*Circular written by Dr. Seguin the last month of his life.*

PHYSIOLOGICAL SCHOOL FOR WEAK-MINDED AND WEAK-BODIED CHILDREN.—As education spreads in the masses it also descends lower in the strata formerly devoted to ignorance and inferiority. From the child who is belated in his speech, or whose perceptions are obtuse, conceptions slow, activity sluggish or unruly, and actions ineffective, to those whose natural brightness is their true teacher the distance is small at first, but becomes greater every day, for this reason: In children the growth of the incapacity is not due to an aggravation of its original cause, be it a disease, ill nutrition, ill-usage, etc., but to a secondary one, namely, *the want of a proper education*, which is not to be found in the ordinary school, and which is the object of the physiological training.





THE SEGUN SCHOOL.—Main Building and Gymnasium.

The Physiological School is intended to develop the functions by the exercise of the organs, and to train the organs in view of improving their functions.

This school is intended for three grades of children:

1. *The very youngest*, whose primary defects need to be corrected as soon as they appear, to prevent aggravation by habit, and the accessory incapacities entailed thereby. These children need to be seen and their mothers advised at regular intervals.

2. *The children who cannot be educated in ordinary schools* must follow a regular course, often a long one, of training the functions of relation, and of elevating these functions to the rank of intellectual capacities. This is the physiological training proper.

3. *Those whose education has not brought any practical advantage* may be trained in view of finding out and developing some individual aptitude which will manifest itself during the course of this physiological training. Thus (a) In the youngest children the retrograde effects of isolation are at once prevented by an early drill of their activity. (b) In children of age to go to school the functions of relation are regulated and intellectualized. (c) In the older ones the prevalent though often hidden aptitude is studied and trained in order to prepare a redeeming capacity, ever so small, for some useful occupation.

This application of physiology to education was the work of my youth, and has been the main object of my thought for forty-two years. I give it my last years, with the assistance of my wife, meaning to leave her the young and clear-headed exponent of the method I have scattered, but not exhausted, in many books, pamphlets, and living lessons.

E. SEGUIN, M.D.

58 West 57th Street, New York.

October, 1880.

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In presenting to the public my claims to be considered a scientific teacher in a department but little known to the general public, and happily of but little interest to the great mass of educators, it seems fitting that I should preface this account of the SEGUIN PHYSIOLOGICAL SCHOOL by a brief statement of how I became associated with it, and why I had the courage to persevere in an undertaking which is certainly unusual, and in which I claim a preëminence which without such explanation might justly appear to be presumptuous.

In 1878 I became associated with Dr. Seguin in his school for feeble-minded children, then conducted in New York. After two years of teaching under his supervision I became his wife.



When, months later, he became aware that his useful life was rapidly drawing to its close, the eager enthusiasm which for forty-two years had kept him loyal to the cause he had made his own did not desert him. He had had the opportunity to instruct me, he was content with the result of his training, and he bequeathed to me as a most sacred legacy the care of the children whose darkened intellects had already begun to catch some dim reflection of his own brilliant mind, illuminated as it was by a love which glorified his every thought in connection with them.

I pledged myself to take up the burden which he laid down only with his life, and for sixteen years have faithfully endeavored to fulfil that promise. Three times since then has the school outgrown the accommodations provided, and so great has been my success that I have ventured now to establish myself where I can amply provide for as many children as I shall be willing to receive at one time, the individual instruction absolutely necessary for the best interests of the children sternly prohibiting my acceptance of an unlimited number of pupils.

The following is a brief synopsis of my husband's life and methods, which I trust will prove of interest to those who may care to learn more of a school which has perhaps no exact counterpart in the world, certainly none on this side the Atlantic.

ELSIE M. SEGUIN.

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#### SYNOPSIS OF DR. SEGUIN'S LIFE AND WORK.

While the names of such scientists as Itard, Pinel, and Esquirol had previously become associated with the study of the insane and of abnormal conditions of the brain, it was not till Dr. Edouard Seguin had decided to devote his young life and brilliant talents to the services of the idiot children of the Hospice de Bicêtre that the scientific study of what is now known as arrested mental development took its place as one of the acknowledged specialties worthy the exclusive attention of a trained physician. Dr. Seguin was at that time a young and already distinguished member of the coterie whose philanthropic ardor has made famous the names of Ledru Rollin, Pierre Leroux, Louis Blanc, Jean Reynaud, Victor Hugo, and many others. This was in 1837. From that time on until his death in 1880 Dr. Seguin's life was spent in ardent devotion to the most utterly helpless, the most abjectly forlorn of all of God's creatures. His treatise on idiocy and the lectures delivered by him from time to time and afterwards published in pamphlet form are to-day the recognized text books of all institutions for

the training of feeble-minded children, and it is because of the lucid exposition of his scientific views as contained in these publications together with the powerful influence of his daily life and example that the people of the Christian world to-day can enjoy the untold blessings of these institutions, and that the people of this his adopted country can boast of the most successful and best-managed schools of this class in the whole world.

Until Dr. Seguin began his investigations, children who failed to show average intelligence were relegated to the class of hopeless patients whose brains were either so malformed or so deficient as to defy all attempts at amelioration, and to most of them life offered only a dreary waste of neglect and often ill-treatment; while to the favored few there remained a seclusion which at best secured only bodily comfort and the absence of active unkindness, the retreat being one where no ray of hope ever illumined the desolate outlook.

After a series of careful and most original experiments with the unhappy inmates of the Hospice de Bicêtre there dawned upon the brilliant intelligence of this most noble philanthropist an altogether new theory of the cause and the effects of a condition of mind which for want of more definite knowledge was in that day classed as Idiocy. Patient and continued investigation by a mind of extraordinary analytical power and of accuracy such as has never been excelled resulted in practical information which encouraged him to believe that this his chosen work was worthy of public attention. After six years of self-denying labor, conducted wholly at his own expense, he ventured to ask the Academy of Sciences to appoint a commission to examine and report upon his methods and work. This commission, consisting of Messieurs Serres, Flourens, and Pariset, selected from its most eminent members, examined, critically and thoroughly, his method of training and educating idiotic children, and reported to the Academy, giving it the highest commendation, and declaring that up to the time when he commenced his labors (1837) idiots could not be educated or cured by any means previously known or practiced, but that *he* had solved the problem.

This report called attention to his school, which was henceforward almost constantly visited by teachers and philanthropists of his own and other nations, and as his methods were thus made known, schools for idiots were soon established in England and several countries of the Continent. Two years later (in 1846) he prepared and published his great treatise, "*Traitément Moral, Hygiène et Education des Idiots, et des Autres Enfants Arriérés,*" which was crowned by the Academy and had a wide circulation. The work is a masterpiece. All its methods, instructions, and rules are perfectly defined. It has been for forty-two years the text-book for all institutions for the instruction of idiots in Europe, Asia, and America. There have been some additions of processes, but none of principles.

These principles may be briefly stated as follows: Idiocy is *not* the result



of deficiency or malformation of the brain or nervous system, nor, in general, is it accompanied by any serious deformity of the body; these ideas formerly, and to some extent yet, very generally entertained, have no foundation in fact; but idiocy is simply an arrest of mental development, occurring either before, at, or after birth, induced in a variety of ways, and by different causes; where there is an accompaniment of physical deformity or defect, as deaf mutism, blindness, insanity, or epilepsy, etc., etc., the cure is more difficult, but in a majority of ordinary cases the arrest of development may be overcome and the idiotic child be restored to society and life, if not to the highest intelligence, by a careful, patient, and long-continued system of physiological training.

The method seems simple enough, and in Dr. Seguin's hands was very generally successful, though in many cases from three to five years were required for complete restoration; but in the hands of those who have attempted it without his patience, perseverance, and tact, the success has not always been so complete. There are now in Europe, Asia, the United States, and Canada more than fifty of these institutions, all of them owing their existence, directly or indirectly, to his personal effort, or the instructions laid down in his books, the "*Treatise*" already mentioned, and "*Idiocy, and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method*," which supplemented the former in 1866. Since 1850 he resided in the United States, though with occasional visits to Europe, and while at times practicing his profession, his heart was always with the idiot children, and his efforts on their behalf were incessant.

He differed from Haüy, de l'Epee, and Sicard, the founders of blind and deaf mute instructions, not only in his more profound attainments in psychology but in the fact that while they received remuneration for their labors, to which they were justly entitled, his were always rendered gratuitously, and in many instances his scanty means were expended in feeding as well as teaching his helpless pupils.

He kept himself constantly informed in regard to the progress of the institutions for the training of idiots, watching over them with the greatest of care, and suggesting, either in his public addresses or his pamphlets, new processes, and discussing physiological and psychological questions. He was gratified to find that the American institutions were more successful than those in Europe; yet it distressed him, in his later years, that the restoration to a normal development was so seldom complete. In his earlier schools his success had been so great that he believed it possible that seventy-five or eighty per cent. could be restored to society and life so far as to become respectable citizens, while a few might be found to be endowed with exceptional abilities. He found that there were no such results now. Even in the American schools, where the best results were being obtained, when there were no complications of insanity or epilepsy, and the general health of the pupils was good, there were none in which fifty per cent. were restored to a normal condition, even by many years of training.

He visited these institutions, examined carefully all their processes, saw much to praise, but somewhat also to grieve over, and returned home convinced that the highest success was only attainable by *individual* instruction and training, accompanied by the association of a few pupils with each other. He had suspected this from the date of his earliest efforts to instruct these poor children. The power of giving continued attention for a long time is so weak and the mental grasp so slight that class instruction, even in matters wholly mechanical, failed to interest or improve them.

"Why do you make that child try the same motions a hundred times a day?" asked the writer of the Doctor one day. "Because she does not make them right in ninety-nine times trying," was the gentle but characteristic answer. This constant repetition in a large class is impossible, and if it were possible would not produce the desired result. Some of the pupils would not work. In *individual* instruction there is more of the personality of the teacher infused into the child; and its ambition is roused, feebly at first, perhaps, but in a larger degree after a time. But the teacher must be one of a thousand, perfect in courage, in tact, in patience, in perseverance. The great expense is also a serious objection, as is the length of time necessary to effect a complete restoration.

If, now, some rich man or woman would endow such a school liberally, the experiment might be made, and prove amply successful. Such is the way most teachers, even with large hearts would have reasoned; but this was never Dr. Seguin's way. If he wanted a thing done he did it himself. True, he had very little means, and his first pupils must be those who could or would pay little or nothing; but he had faith in the principles he had laid down, and he had the patience and perseverance to try it.

So he began with one pupil, and that one of no great promise. His success was wonderful. Soon he had two; then three. He needed a teacher and found it difficult to find one thoroughly adapted to the work out of the many who applied. At last a young teacher came whose tact, patience, skill in teaching, perseverance, and faith were all that could be desired. Two years later she became his wife. The Seguin Physiological School prospered under their joint efforts, and though not yet paying its way bade fair to do so ere long. But six months later Dr. Seguin died, after two weeks' illness. On his death-bed he bequeathed the school to her—he had little else to bequeath. She took up the burden and has borne it for sixteen years. It is now a success, not only in the restoration of many of its pupils to a normal mental condition, but in its thorough organization and maintenance.

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The following points seem to have been settled in regard to the instruction and training of children suffering from arrested physical and mental development:





THE SAGUIN SCHOOL.—Children's Playground

The best age for the beginning of a course of training and instruction is from five to ten years. At a later age progress is much slower, and recovery less complete.

Individual instruction is necessary for the best results, because of the different phases of this condition, both mental and physical, and the numerous complications of it, such as mutism, want of coördinate action of the muscles, difficulty of articulation, habits and automatic actions acquired, tendencies to epilepsy, the difficulty of fixing the attention, etc.

At the same time, association with others similarly afflicted is, to a certain extent, necessary, in order to arouse emulation and fix attention. The progress of the pupils is greatly accelerated if they observe that those whom they instinctively recognize as unfortunate like themselves, are acquiring knowledge which they have not yet attained. This is particularly true in gymnastic and kindergarten exercises.

The large institutions though excellent in their way, cannot, in the nature of the case, accomplish as good results, nor those which will prove as satisfactory to the friends of the pupils, as individual instruction and a limited association with other pupils, because the teaching in these institutions is wholly by classes, and the dullest and least advanced pupil measures the progress of the whole class.

Private home training and the isolation of the child is still more prejudicial to its best interests, and is exceedingly wearisome and discouraging to the teacher. I speak of this from abundant observation of the cases in which it has been tried. The monotonous repetition of the same word or the same idea, often many hundreds of times, is tiresome to the child and the teacher, and the former, unaccustomed to fix the attention long on a single subject which does not interest, soon tires, becomes inattentive, and perhaps stubbornly refuses to attempt to master it.

In the PHYSIOLOGICAL SCHOOL the attention is not long fixed on one topic, and when the child recurs to it it is presented in a new light; emulation, imitation, and observation are brought to his aid, and he accomplishes in two or three days what, with a private teacher, he would not have learned so well in two or three months.



The effort to develop in these children the mental, moral, and physical powers which have so long lain dormant can only prove successful when love—the love of the teacher for the child and the love awakened in the heart of the child for the teacher—is in active exercise. While nothing short of the highest qualifications of special study and general intelligence, combined with remarkable quickness and tact, and an almost infinite patience and perseverance, are indispensable to success, without this love, with its power over both natures, the teaching will be perfunctory and there will be little progress.

In justice to the child and the instructor, a *course* of not less than *three years* should be insisted upon at the outset. Let us remember that these children are suffering from prolonged infancy, forget their physical growth, and *train them as infants*. The progress will be slow the first year—it is *necessarily so*, and should be *no cause for discouragement*—but the rapid strides subsequently made will repay the patient waiting.

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And now a word in explanation of the physiological method so eagerly insisted upon by its eminent founder and whose results have so fully justified his enthusiasm.

Dr. Seguin taught that instead of striving to go at once to the *source* of intellectual life, the brain, and *there* produce a certain impression, the teaching should begin with the *members* whose actions the brain should direct. He would train the *hand*, for instance: teach it to perform the offices which to most children are instinctive, by slowly arousing its muscular power, its capacity to use this power, and *thus* stimulate the *will*. By long-continued and patient effort the movements of the hand become no longer an imitation of the teacher's motions, but a distinctly intellectual act of the child itself, and thus the *brain* develops as a result of the education of the *hand*.

The difficulties of this apparently simple method are greatly complicated by the individual peculiarities which make each child require special exercises calculated to strengthen the points in which it is particularly weak. The short, stumpy fingers with brittle nails and soft, lifeless, flabby skin of one child requires

exercise to elongate and strengthen the fingers, while the stiff, unyielding, unsteady hand of another will require long rests previous to short exercises of precision. So slight an illustration as this will suffice to suggest the immense importance of a teacher of wide experience, infinite patience, and endless resource.

Next in point of progress, and first in point of importance, comes the training of the eye. When the eye is no more capable of directing itself than is the mind, the hand can direct it toward objects in several ways. What language can do can be done by the hand, namely: it can present the objects to the eye in their proper light, at the proper distance, at the proper opportunity, and with the proper degree of insistence and pertinacity, even following the eye in its wanderings till it has compelled attention. To create thus in the child's eye the habit of looking upon the hand of the teacher, and upon his own, as a leader of other functions is alone an immense stride in physiological education.

In the same way the eye helps the hand as the latter becomes more serviceable, so that at the middle point where the two series of exercises meet it is impossible to say which is the main object of the training—the hand by the eye or the eye by the hand, both being trained for the same end. While an average child of normal intelligence picks up information of all sorts, often without being quite conscious that he is learning, and rarely indeed aware of how he learns, his opportunities for improvement put the child of arrested development at an immense disadvantage. On the other hand the slow and methodical steps made necessary by the psycho-physiological method result in an accuracy of conception for the less gifted child which is rarely the attribute of children stocked from all the various sources.

With this brief suggestion of the theory on which is founded the practice of the SEGUIN SCHOOL, a few illustrations of its practical application to the children under training here may be not without interest. As previously stated the gymnasium is a most important adjunct to the school room. Regular exercises in walking and breathing under a trained instructor, and physical exercises with dumb bells, Indian clubs, etc., are a part of the daily routine. All the children are taught to dance and march. Music is a pleasant and improving accompaniment to these exer-

cises, which while serving the purpose of lessons result in the enjoyment that comes to most children from play.

Children who need instruction in articulation have twenty-minute lessons morning and afternoon.

The number work, in charge of an experienced teacher (Normal graduate), is systematic and practical.

Nearly all the children learn to draw. First they have straight lines, obliques, and curves on the blackboard; then the same thing on slates and paper, and finally writing and drawing lessons are begun.

The stiff, unyielding fingers and soft, flabby muscles which characterize the hand of nearly every child who comes to the school are taught by exercises which are carefully graduated and given with special reference to the individual needs of each pupil, till careful precision and firm, intelligent touch succeeds to the incapable helplessness which under less skillful management would leave the child a helpless dependent on the ministrations of others throughout its life. As this control of the muscles and steadiness of the eye grows under manifold exercises the child is made to put to an immediate and practical use the powers so acquired; the girls are taught to sew, crochet, knit, and embroider, while the boys learn the use of knife, saw, and hammer, and both boys and girls use the type-writer.

Lessons are given every day, to those who can understand it, in general information. Such subjects as coffee, tea, sugar, coal, gold, silver, wood, salt, wool, cotton, etc., are explained, and charts with natural specimens shown.

*At the proper time* reading is taught by the word, sentence, and phonetic methods.

Instruction in music is given if unquestionable musical talent is shown.

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The New York *Tribune* in its issue of June 28, 1896, has an article on the training of the weak-minded, from which we quote:

"THE WILL POWER DEVELOPED."—Happily, in some cases that have appeared almost hopeless, the child has been so developed in the judgment and will power that are usually lacking as to be able to take his place in the arena of life. A boy of four and a half years was entered for a three years'



course at the SEGUIN SCHOOL. He could neither make an articulate sound nor understand a word addressed to him. He could not play with other children, and took no interest in pictures or toys, but his improvement was so remarkable that at the age of thirteen he entered a military school, did well in his studies, and was in every particular thrown on his own resources as the other pupils were.

“The work of teaching these unfortunates is peculiarly exhausting ; the same instruction must be repeated to the same pupils for days, weeks, months, with little manifestation of improvement ; yet the teacher must never become listless, must have her faculties constantly alert, or she will fail to arouse interest in her charges. Reward comes at last when dormant powers awake, and the result of patient, persistent effort is apparent.”

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During the last five years many children who could not speak a word on entering the school are now not only talking in sentences but reading intelligently in first, second, and third readers ; and two boys who have been kept at the SEGUIN SCHOOL for a shorter time and could not speak on entering now read script and print equally well. It would not be difficult to multiply cases of children whose real life has only begun under the systematic and tender care here received, but enough has been said to illustrate the practical advantage of the methods employed. More than this is undesirable in a circular which is intended simply to give information to those who need the help it offers.

A mother who came to place her little girl in this school speaks of her impressions of the school as follows :

“I have never seen anywhere a more happy, healthy set of children. The decorum of the school was so perfect that a visitor might well have imagined herself in a quiet private household. No noise, no confusion, nothing to indicate the residence of twenty children and half as many teachers until you stood in the presence of the assembled school. Then, while the lack of average intelligence could not but be apparent in the faces of these God's own innocents, there beamed such health from the rosy cheeks, such satisfaction in the trustful confidence of the children towards their teachers, that I could only feel glad to think of the happy home to which they all had come, and where lessons of unselfishness and gentle courtesy would be taught, along with acquirements which shall fit them for the quiet, unobtrusive corner, and the love and society of their own homes, rescuing them from the hideous isolation of an undeveloped mind.”

## REFERENCES

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LEWIS A. SAYRE, M.D.	New York City.
E. C. SEGUIN, M.D.	"
E. C. SPITZKA, M.D.	"
A. E. MACDONALD, M.D.	"
ABRAHAM JACOBI, M.D.	"
M. ALLEN STARR, M.D.	"
LANDON CARTER GRAY, M.D.	"
CHARLES L. DANA, M.D.	"
FREDERICK PETERSON, M.D.	"
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WM. A. HAMMOND, M.D.	Washington, D.C.
Rev. WM. LLOYD,	New York City.
Rev. ROBERT COLLYER, D.D.	"
Rev. JOHN HALL, D.D.	"
Rev. R. S. MACARTHUR, D.D.	"
Rev. R. HEBER NEWTON, D.D.	"
Rev. GUSTAV GOTTHEIL, D.D.	"
Right Rev. HENRY C. POTTER, D.D.	"
Rev. R. S. STORRS, D.D.	Brooklyn, N.Y.

DIOCESAN HOUSE,  
29 LAFAYETTE PLACE,  
NEW YORK.

JUNE 15, 1891.

*My Dear Madam:*

I know of your work from testimonies of those whose children have been your pupils, and am glad to express my confidence that for the delicate and difficult task you have undertaken you have peculiar and preëminent qualifications; and I am, dear madam,

Sincerely yours,

H. C. POTTER.

MRS. E. M. SEGUIN.





